



FIFTH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Hahn's "Passport" to a Healthier Childhood Approved by Suffolk Legislature**

*Proposal seeks to promote youth outdoor activities, reduce childhood obesity through a parks department visitor recognition program*

RIVERHEAD, NY – Seeking to reverse an alarming rise in childhood obesity, Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn (D-Setauket), earlier this week, secured unanimous approval for an initiative that will encourage children to visit, explore, and be active in Suffolk County parks. Under the proposal, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation will design and distribute upon request a passport-like sticker or stamp book to youth patrons. The parks department will also work with schools, scout troops, civic organizations and chambers to design stickers/stamps symbolic of each individual park. Once fully implemented, children who frequent a County park, beach or campground during its normal operating season will be entitled to get a unique logo stamp/sticker to collect in their parks passport book after each visit.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over the past 30 years, obesity has doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents. In 2012, the CDC reported that "more than one third of children and adolescents were overweight or obese." One recommendation given by researchers, advocacy groups and

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pediatricians for combating this rise is to increase children's physical activity and outside play, a goal encompassed by this resolution.

"With over 46,000 acres of parkland managed by Suffolk County alone, there is no shortage of ways for families to get outside and explore the nearly limitless recreational pursuits just outside of their doors," said Legislator Kara Hahn. "From swimming and hiking to boating and bicycling, children throughout Suffolk County don't necessarily need a passport to stamp fun into their free-time, but the new program is sure to stir-up excitement about the world class activities they are participating in."

"The Parks Passport Program is a unique way to showcase the beautiful parks and trails available in Suffolk County's parks. It's even a better way to encourage the community to use the parks for exercising. Walking, no matter the pace, has been shown to reduce the incidence of cardiovascular diseases, obesity, diabetes and other diseases related to sedentary lifestyles." Janine Logan, Director of the Long Island Health Collaborative and Senior Director of Communications and Community Health for the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council.

The bill now goes to County Executive Steve Bellone for his signature.

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